Webcasts to go interactive
By Ephraim Schwartz

PHOENIX -- COMBINING live streaming video and audio technology with chat room capability, startup company NetOnCourse[SM] is pioneering interactive Webcasts that may raise the bar for any organization that presents live events via the Internet.

At the Demo 2001 conference here, Fort Lee, N.J.-based NetOnCourse[SM] demonstrated its Mass Interaction-Live (MI-Live) platform that allows the audience to interact with the presenters.

Using off-the-shelf Webcast technology, which is displayed in a frame within the screen, the system reserves the right-hand side of the screen for viewers sitting in front of their PCs.

The system also creates subsets of the audience based on user requests for participation and size of the overall audience. Users in any group can ask questions, make comments, and respond to other questioners anonymously.

On the producer's side, questions are monitored to gain a better sense of how well the event is being received by the audience and if there are any audience-wide questions that need to be addressed immediately, even if it means taking the producers off-script. Following an event, questions and comments can be reviewed and analyzed to identify issues and to develop a more targeted response to audience concerns or questions that may have come up.

The platform will be used for corporate meetings, financial analyst briefings, corporate learning centers, press conferences, or for a live auction.

NetOnCourse[SM] is currently in beta tests with a number of undisclosed partners.